

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

January 30, 2001 LB 166

600 lives could be saved. Study after study has demonstrated that .08 is effective in saving lives. So far, 18 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the .08 standard. Among those is Illinois. Within a year of passing its own .08 law in 1996, Illinois experienced a 5.5 percent drop in traffic fatalities over all, and an 11.6 decrease in alcohol-related fatalities. Let's turn for a moment to the Nebraska statistics, and you should all have a handout, on the front of which is entitled ".08 BAC FACTS". The second page is what I would put your attention toward. Those are the most up-to-date figures that we currently have. According to information provided by the Nebraska Highway traffic (sic) Safety Office, there were 255 (sic--256) fatal crashes in our state in 1999, accounting for 295 deaths. One hundred and four of those fatal crashes were alcohol related, as were 122 of the deaths. That's over 41 percent of the deaths were alcohol related. Between 1990 and '99, 7 percent of the fatal crashes in Nebraska involved blood alcohol. Well, you might think, 7 percent, that's just very insignificant, but what if it was your daughter or your father that was killed? I don't think it would be insignificant to you then. So, for those...in the last 5 years also in Nebraska, there have been 34 fatalities involving drivers with a BAC between .08 and .099, and in 1999 alone there were 13 deaths. So, for those who argue that lowering the current legal limit only a couple of points wouldn't make that much difference, well, my answer is that had we had this lower amount just a few years back it would have made a great deal of difference to at least 104 families in our state. So far, I've only talked about the death rates, but LB 166 makes sense from an economic perspective as well. In 1999 alone, the estimated costs of all motor vehicle crash (sic) in the state was over \$1 billion, and this included lost wages, medical expenses, administrative costs, insurance costs, vehicle damage and other damage. How much could that amount have been lowered if we had had a lower BAC level? The...as you all know, just a short time ago there was a federal mandate handed down which requires that all states either adopt and enforce a state law compatible to the federal .08 standard or they will face a reduction in the allocation of federal highway funds. In dollars, what's this...what this amounts to is, if we do not enact this law, in 19...in 2004 we will have 4 percent of these funds withheld; in